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Kuechler, Manfred

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The NSDAP Vote in the Weimar Republic: An Assessment of the State-of-the-Art in View of Modern Electoral Research (1)

*Manfred Kuechler**

Abstract: Over the last decade, several authors have questioned the conventional wisdom about the rise of Nazism in the Weimar Republic: that Hitler's main support came from the lower middle-classes. They suggest a much broader support base for the Nazis. Most pointedly, they describe the NSDAP as a first *Volkspartei* - in part using a much improved data base and employing complex statistical techniques. This paper examines the true extent of substantive differences, assesses the methodological soundness of various studies, and offers a synthesis of insights based on solid empirical evidence. Rhetoric aside, the more recent studies provide refinement and corroboration rather than grounds for a fundamental revision. As a guide for further research, a shift from global statistical analysis to local and regional studies using a multitude of data sources is recommended.

Introduction

Who voted for Hitler is more than a matter of purely historical interest and of scholarly debate - in Germany as well as abroad. Viewed from abroad, there is widespread agreement that (West) Germany established itself as a stable democracy, as a society solidly rooted in democratic norms and values in the post-war period. After some early doubts about the Germans'true commitment to the new order (Almond and Verba 1963), subsequent studies found ample empirical evidence for a genuine transformation (e.g. Baker, Dalton and Hildebrandt 1981). Some even see West Ger-

* Address all communications to Manfred Kuechler, Hunter College, Dept. of Sociology, 695 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10021, USA. E-Mail Address: MAKHC@CUNYVM (BITNET/EARN) Telephone: (212) 772-5588 Fax: (212) 772-5645.

many as a 'model stable democracy' (Conradt 1980:265). Yet, some doubts kept lingering and surfaced at various occasions (see Kuechler 1992c). The process of German unification, the prospect of a unified and even more powerful Germany, then, once again triggered the emergence of latent fears and concerns. They showed in statements by the elites rather than in public opinion polls - but polls are rather inept in gauging ambivalence and latent resentment. For example, one day after the ratification of the treaty on economic and monetary union and the declaration to guarantee Poland's existing borders by the two German parliaments on June 21,1990 the *New York Times* expressed these fears quite bluntly: »Whom should we distrust more - the Russians or the Germans?« (Safire 1990). This commentary was part of a series of editorials and news stories reminding the world about Germany's dark past. The more sweeping changes in Eastern Europe, the demise of the Soviet Union then quickly diverted attention away from Germany - till the outburst of violent attacks on foreigners in the fall of 1991 and the display of new assertiveness of the German government, e.g. by pushing for early recognition of Croatia or by trying to reestablish German as a lingua franca in diplomatic affairs. In spite of all documented good democratic behavior, the Germans still seem to be on probation - at least as viewed by small, but influential minorities abroad.

Within (West) Germany, the so called »Historikerstreit« of the mid-1980s (for a summary see Herz 1987) triggered an intense public debate bringing the Nazi past to the forefront again. And the process of unification led to reflections on the nature of German nationalism and to much reluctance on part of the intellectual Left to embrace the idea of a unified Germany. Mass support for unification was uniformly high cutting across partisan lines, but it was grounded in expectations of economic gains rather than in national chauvinism (Kuechler 1992b). However, continuing transition problems and disappointment with the actual course of de facto unification may create a situation where the depth and stability of democratic convictions in the now larger German public is put to a true test.

For the most part, scholarly disputes in the social sciences have little or no bearing on politics or on everyday life. Coming to grips with the Nazi past, fully understanding the Weimar experience, though, is quintessential for building and maintaining a stable social and political order in Germany and in all of Europe. Today, an assessment of old and new explanations for the rise of Hitler is as important as ever. And the logic of scholarly inquiry dictates to consider both substance and method.

In contrast to Spain and Italy, fascism in Germany rose to power at the polls. The German National Socialists (Nazis) succeeded in elections which - up to 1932 - deserve to be called 'democratic'. Therefore, individual voting behavior constitutes an essential component in a comprehensive analysis of the transformation from democratic rule to a totalita-

rian regime. Studying voting behavior, focusing on the individual voter and on segments of voters with similar characteristics, however, is a complement rather than an alternative to macro level analysis. Macro level theories typically cannot be put to a stringent empirical test, but often more specific assertions about micro level behavior are implied. These implications, then, need to be compatible with available data on individual level behavior. This way, empirically grounded theories of voting behavior, provide for at least partial tests of more comprehensive attempts to explain the rise of fascism in Germany.

Nevertheless, until recently there were few stringent empirical analyses of voting behavior in the Weimar Republic. Major contributions to the explanation of Nazism (e.g. Bendix, 1952; Burnham, 1972; Kornhauser, 1959; Lipset, 1960) use selected voting data in an impressionistic manner or superficially reassess the few more comprehensive empirical analyses (e.g. Loomis and Beegle, 1946; Pratt, 1948). These, in turn, lack methodological rigor and appear to be flawed in many ways. A sole exception is Heberle's (1945) contemporaneous work which was published with much delay. Heberle's study is limited by its exclusive focus on the Schleswig-Holstein region, though. Also, applying today's standards, the data analysis lacks sophistication though it is adequate given its time. Finally, in the 1980s, a number of methodologically more sophisticated studies arrived at conclusions suggesting major revisions of previously established explanations (e.g. Brown, 1982; Childers, 1983; Falter et al., 1983; Falter, 1984 and 1991; Falter and Hanisch, 1986; Hamilton, 1982). However, in part these revisions are at odds with each other.

In the following, I will offer a comparative assessment of the earlier and the more recent studies from the vantage point of present day electoral sociology. I will offer my view of what should be considered as the body of well established knowledge, as evidence solidly grounded in empirical data. To do this, much attention must be paid to methodological problems. However, I will not address the methodological and statistical issues in technical detail, but rather discuss them in a format accessible to the non-specialist. In general, I feel that sound statistical procedure cannot hurt, but that adherence to technical rules does not necessarily lead to a more meaningful sociological analysis. Compared with modern election research, there is a greater need in historical election research to utilize a multitude of data and information coming from different sources in innovative ways. There are no fully codified procedures for this kind of empirical analysis - combining qualitative and quantitative elements - not now and not in the future. Methodological problems, then, are not confined to aspects of complex statistical analysis.

The Conflicting Results

The traditional view. To start things off a brief review of official election returns may be helpful (see table 1). These results suggest a rather straightforward interpretation on the global level. While the share for the left parties and the Catholic block remains basically unchanged, the share for the established bourgeois parties continuously decreases. At first, new splinter parties benefit from this demise. However, apart from the NSDAP, they are not able to consolidate their gains. This suggest an additional (quite plausible, but not logically deductible) interpretation: Left parties and the Catholic block parties did keep their clientele constant, not just the size of their vote share. To put it differently: Voter swings were restricted to flows between the bourgeois parties, the splinter parties, the non-voters, and the NSDAP. Table 1 shows the net result of these flows only; more complex flows could have resulted in the same table. However, if the minimal flow thesis is correct, then the success of the NSDAP is a direct consequence of the bourgeois parties' loss and - to a lesser extent - of increased turnout (successful mobilization).

Table 1: Official returns in Weimar Elections 1924-1932 in per cent of eligible voters*

Year	1924b	1928	1930	1932a	1932b
Party groups					
Left parties (SPD, USPD, KPD)	27.4	30.2	30.7	30.1	29.8
Catholic Block (Zentrum, BVP)	13.5	11.3	12.1	13.4	12.3
Bourgeois parties (DDP/DSP, DVP, DNVP)	28.7	20.8	12.7	7.0	9.3
NSDAP	2.3	2.0	14.9	31.2	26.5
Other parties	5.8	10.4	11.1	1.7	2.1
Non-voters	21.2	24.4	18.0	15.9	19.4

* Table entries are based on official election returns as reported by Falter et al. (1986, p.41) in their table 1.3.1.1. The difference to 100 reflects the share of voters marking their ballot invalidly (1.0 per cent in 1924 and 1928; .6 per cent for the three following elections). Similar tables in the literature show some discrepancies (see e.g. Hanisch 1983, p.281/282; Falter and Hanisch 1986). Hamilton (1982, p.476) combines the BVP (Bavarian equivalent of Zentrum) with the other parties and thus misrepresents the Catholic block.

If we further assume that a. the party system reflects social cleavages in the electorate, that b. parties primarily represent the group-specific interest of specific social strata (e.g. industrial workers, Catholics), and that c. social class was a dominant factor determining individual voting behavior, we can then conclude that the voters of the NSDAP were mainly made up of the Protestant lower middle class. Such an interpretation was first put forward in contemporaneous analyses - most notably by Heberle (1945 (2), p.121): »The main mass support came, as we have clearly shown, from the middle layers of society, from those *Kleinbauern* and *Kleinbürger* who in the past had adhered to political ideas very different from those characteristic of the Nazi creed. We have seen how the National Socialists, by appealing to certain deep-seated resentments and sentiments, by skillfully utilizing economic interests and, we may add, by concealing their own ultimate aims, gradually won the support of these classes.« Later on, Lipset (1960) became one of the most fervent advocates of this explanation. For a long time, the »Protestant lower middle class« thesis stood unchallenged and was considered as solidly grounded knowledge.

Yet, there also was some disagreement. Several authors (e.g. Kornhauser, 1959) questioned the relevance of social class membership for individual behavior in general, and its impact on voting behavior in particular. They focus on what they perceive as 'mass society', a society in which the individual increasingly lacks firmly established ties. In the absence of firm personal and institutional ties, individuals become likely to fall prey to mobilization efforts of mass movements. This mass society perspective was most prominently used by Bendix (1952) to explain the rise of Nazism, but he later recanted. Bendix shared the view that the clientele of Left and Catholic parties remained stable, but he suggested a modification of the second link in this explanation. In his view, the resistance of unionized workers and of Catholics to National Socialism rests on the conservation of personal and institutional ties. Not a difference of class interests, but a much weaker social fabric made protestant lower middle class voters more susceptible to the NSDAP.

Burnham's (1972) theory of 'political confessionalism' takes a middle ground. He offers an explanation why the ties between the protestant middle classes and their parties were weaker than those of other segments. Notwithstanding important differences, all explanations contend that both Catholicism and organized labor were resistent to National Socialism at least up to the end of the Weimar Republic. Thus, these segments of the German population were not part of providing democratic legitimization to the Nazis whose rise to power must then be accredited to the vulnerability of the protestant middle classes.

Recent American studies. In the 1980s, several scholars both in the United States and in Germany set out to further scrutinize this seemingly well proven thesis. Overall, they do not refute this explanation altogether. However, they suggest a number of significant modifications and refinements. Before assessing the validity of these revisionist claims, I will briefly summarize these studies.

Among the American studies, the monographs by Childers (1983, the revised version of a 1976 Ph.D. thesis) and by Hamilton (1982) have received wide spread attention. Also, a number of other Ph.D. theses from the 1970s (e.g. Meckstroth, 1972; Waldman, 1973; Wernette, 1974) helped to set the research agenda of later work in Germany (e.g. Falter 1980 and Hänisch 1983). However, they went largely unnoticed beyond the small group of scholars working on the subject.

Turning to Childers and Hamilton, we find that, in essence, Childers reconfirms Heberle's analysis:

> »The nucleus of the NSDAP's following was formed by the small farmers, shopkeepers, and independent artisans of the old middle class, who constituted the most stable and consistent components of the National Socialist constituency between 1924 and 1932.« (Childers, 1983, p.264)

However, Childers introduces a more differentiated view of the middle class. His analysis finds only limited and fluctuating support of the NSDAP by white collar workers and by retired middle class people. In contrast, he claims considerable support by the upper middle class:

> »Although National Socialist sympathies among lower-middle-class white-collar employees were less developed than expected, the NSDAP found a surprisingly large following in more established social circles.« (p.264)

Finally, Childers argues for a differentiated look on the working class. While the NSDAP was unable to make significant gains among the unionized industrial workers, the Nazis found considerable support among workers in crafts and small business. Viewed over time, Childers sees the NSDAP as developing to a »Volkspartei« (p.265), to a »catch-all party of protest« (p.268). By 1932, the NSDAP electorate is bonded by deep rooted contempt for the existing political and economic order.

Hamilton's multi-layered considerations in his attempt to explain the »Weimar Catastrophe« are difficult to summarize briefly. Though he devotes much space to an empirical analysis of voting data, his explanations do not rely exclusively on these data. With good reason, Hamilton is skeptical about the potential of a purely quantitative statistical analysis. Yet, his exposition makes it difficult at times to discern the logical status of his assertions. In contrast to Childers, Hamilton (1982, p.424-428) is much more outspoken in his refutation of the dominant lower middle class'

theory and explanations following the Marxist or the mass society tradition do not fare any better. Hamilton's analysis of voting returns in selected large cities (see also his later analysis of Braunschweig in Hamilton 1984) discovers above average Nazi vote shares in precincts with a high proportion of upper middle class. To put these pieces of empirical evidence into a comprehensive conceptual framework Hamilton outlines an »alternative theory« (p.437) which at times he also refers to as a 'group-bases position'. Though not always clearly labeled this way, his theory uses concepts first developed by the Michigan School of voting research such as party identification, normal vote, and realignment (see e.g. Kuechler 1992a). As a consequence of system failure, traditional ties between parties and electorate erode, voters are becoming increasingly open to new options. And in Hamilton's view, only the NSDAP succeeded in presenting itself as a viable new option.

> »The rise of the NSDAP later in the decade [the 1920s, M.K.] was, as indicated, an instance of the third kind of elections [the creation of a new political option, M.K.]. The new party's cadres provided a new set of influences, a new set of social pressures that, taken in connection with the other factors aiding them, led to the generation of a mass following.« (Hamilton, 1982, p.443)

Based on this conclusion, Hamilton argues to shift the focus of analysis to the mobilization process, to the strategies employed and to the organizational setting:

> »The key focus in the present explanation of National Socialism involves the role of the party's cadres, of its militants, or, to use a social science expression, of its 'opinion leaders'.« (p.441)

By implication then, the question of the composition of the NSDAP electorate, is of secondary importance - or Hamilton may view the NSDAP as a catch-all party without a clear socio-demographic profile in the first place.

To conclude the review of more recent American work, Brown (1982) must be noted. In contrast to Childers and Hamilton, Brown's analysis employs rather complex state-of-the-art statistical techniques. Unfortunately, it is based on the old ICPSR data set which is plagued by many flaws (see e.g. Falter and Gruner 1981). Also, the format of a short journal article does not allow to explain his methodology in detail and surely leaves most readers somewhat puzzled. Similar to Childers, Brown does not refute the lower middle class' thesis altogether. Rather he suggests a number of modifications. Brown sees support for the NSDAP among some part of the working class; slightly different from Childers he identifies this segment as workers in trades and transportation. Most significantly, Brown emphasizes the Catholic contribution to the success of the Nazis - among workers in trades and transportation and among the urban petite

bourgeoisie. All in all, Brown's also suggest to define the NSDAP electorate more broadly than the lower middle class' thesis implies.

Recent German work. On the German side, the study by Hänisch (1983) and the work by Jürgen Falter and his collaborators are most important. In addition, Manstein (1988) provides an overview on a broad range of work related to the rise of National Socialism including historical voting research. Hänisch's study is a M.A. thesis completed at the University of Duisburg in 1981/82. He later joined the Falter group, which started out with a major project to generate a reliable data set combining official election returns with census data on low aggregation levels (»Kreise« and »Gemeinden«). The tedious and time consuming construction of this data base constitutes a major advance in the field, since the data will be fully available to all interested scholars. After completion of the first phase, it provided the base for numerous analyses and publications of the Falter group, only some of which are explicitly referenced in this article (see below). Recently, a comprehensive book publication has become available (Falter 1991).

Hänisch emphasizes the significance of religious affiliation which starting in 1930 constitutes the most important factor impacting on voting behavior - independently from social class (p.225). In addition, Hänisch stresses the urban-rural difference. He sees an urban-rural realignment process (p.226), a shift from the urban Protestants to the rural Protestants as target of successful Nazi mobilization (p. 116). In part, Hänisch reconfirms earlier findings by Heberle and by Lipset, but his final conclusion is markedly different, refuting the predominance of the middle classes in the Nazi support base:

> »Die soziale Basis der NSDAP speiste sich aus allen Schichten. ... Ihr Elektorat besaß folglich klassenübergreifenden Charakter, wobei jedoch tendenziell ein Mittelschichteneinfluß erkennbar war. ... Die These jedoch, daß das Elektorat der NSDAP *überwiegend* durch die Mittelschichten geprägt war, mußte nach den vorliegenden Ergebnissen verworfen werden.« (Hänisch, 1983, p.228)

Also, Hänisch finds no support for a relationship between increased turnout and Nazi vote share in the 1930 election. Matter of fact, he claims definitive proof of the absence of such a relationship (p.229).

As noted above, the publications of Jürgen Falter and his group are too numerous to be reviewed in detail (3), but the main thrust of their argument can be easily described. Similar to Childers (1983) and Hänisch (1983), Falter and his collaborators (e.g. Falter and Hänisch, 1986, p.215) find significant empirical evidence conflicting with the lower middle class' thesis. Instead, they put forward the notion of the NSDAP as Volkspartei' as far as its voter clientele is concerned. In particular, they find NSDAP support coming from parts of the working class. Most likely, these workers had previously voted for bourgeois parties or had abstained.

To summarize: First, all of the more recent analyses either downright refute or significantly modify the established lower middle class' thesis. All authors emphasize the fact that the NSDAP electorate cuts across all strata. Yet, the resistance of the Catholic rural population on the one hand and of the unionized industrial workers on the other is not challenged. Secondly, there is general agreement (and this includes the earlier studies) that a growing dissatisfaction with the output of the political system was essential in the Nazi's rise to power - as a prerequisite or at least as reinforcement. This can be seen in Childers' characterization of the NSDAP as a 'catch-all party of protest' or in Hamilton's classification of the 1930 elections as 'realigning'. There is less consensus on the exact form of perceived output deficiencies - be it primarily economic or other. In particular, the notion that rising unemployment was a principal and direct factor in the rise of the NSDAP is hotly contested. Such a notion was entertained by e.g. Frey and Week (1981) based on econometric models with highly aggregated data. This issue, then, was among the first to be addressed by the Falter group (Falter 1984; Falter at al. 1983) after the »Kreise« data base had been established.

On the national level, unemployment and Nazi vote share do rise jointly over time. Contingent upon choice of indicators, this relationship is more or less obvious - without employing any sophisticated statistical tools. On a lower aggregation level, however, Falter finds a *negative* relationship between level of unemployment and Nazi vote share. As a consequence, it is not plausible to assume that individual unemployed voters were particularly drawn to the NSDAP. Only further differentiation, like using group specific unemployment rates for white collar and blue collar workers, does produce a (very modest) positive relationship between white collar unemployment and Nazi vote (see also Speier 1986). Finally, the impact of unemployment is further mediated by the social context (level of urbanity, dominant religious affiliation). In sum, there is no compelling evidence to suggest that unemployment was a uniformly strong and direct, if not downright decisive factor in the rise of the NSDAP.

Scope and Limits of Aggregate Analysis

The lower middle class' theory has been essential in shaping the scholarly as well as the lay view of the Weimar Republic and of its demise. The impact of this thesis goes way beyond the realm of historical voting research. Matter of fact, it was established as conventional wisdom not just by empirical voting studies, but maybe more so by political theorizing. A case in point is Lipset's (1960) much cited treatise which rests on theoretical arguments and an assessment of available voting studies rather than

on an original empirical analysis. The more recent voting studies are of importance, then, not just for the special field of historical voting research, but for a much more general assessment of the Nazi era. It is necessary to determine whether the new voting studies do provide a clearly superior empirical base on which theories of larger range should be built. As a consequence, some attention must be paid to the methodological issues involved.

In a first step I will outline a series of methodological criteria to assess the reliability and validity of the various voting studies. With these in mind, I will discuss the merit of more recently introduced revisions to the traditional view. Finally, I will describe what I see as safely established knowledge on the subject.

The aggregation problem. Obviously, the most difficult problem historical voting research faces is the lack of individual level data. Starting with 1940s, the tools of survey research have been developed to collect data on individual voting behavior along with background characteristics (like social class or religious affiliation) as well as attitudes, beliefs, and opinions. The survey method makes it possible to analyze the relationship between individual traits and vote choice; this has been the major feat of modern voting research (see Kuechler 1992a). In contrast, historical voting research as well as present day voting research in countries without an established tradition of survey research are lacking these seemingly indispensable tools. At best, official voting returns can be matched with census data on a rather low aggregation level and the units on this aggregation level can then be treated as cases in a statistical analysis. Today, it is common knowledge among sociologists, and not just among methodologists, that a relationship between two variables on the aggregate level may or may not reflect a relationship on the level of the individual. An inference about the individual level may be justified, but there is always the risk of an *ecological fallacy.* Unfortunately, in most cases it is impossible to safely determine whether or not a relationship found on the aggregate level holds on the individual level as well. To use an illustration from present day Germany: Using urban precincts as aggregation units, we typically find a positive relationship between the vote share for the Greens and the percentage of guest workers. Obviously, guest workers do not vote for the Greens more often than other people. Matter of fact, they do not vote for the Greens at all - because they are not eligible to vote. Here, we are sure that an inference about the individual level would be erroneous, using additional knowledge about institutional arrangements. However, when we consider variables like unemployment rate or percentage of workers for specific geo-political units, an inference with respect to the behavior of individual *may be correct.* This is nothing new, and all authors discussed here are fully aware of the problem. In their writings, there are many

warnings to this effect. At the same time, supposedly just to improve the prose (e.g. Hänisch, 1983, p.64), the wording often strongly suggests an individual level interpretation. However, neither these general warnings nor explicit disclaimers - that individual level behavior is not at issue - sufficiently deal with the problem at hand. With some exceptions, the spatial units typically used in historical voting research (4) are not of interest in themselves. For example, most »Kreise« are defined by rather arbitrarily drawn boundaries which are often redrawn over time to accommodate administrative goals. (5) To be sure, there are some »Kreise« in Germany representing a specific local culture. As a rule, however, they cannot be considered as meaningful *social* entities providing the people living there with a specific identity. Taking issue with Hänisch (1983, p.63), I contend that voting research is concerned with individual political behavior and that its results are perceived this way - irrespective of the author's rhetoric. The problem of an ecological fallacy cannot be adequately resolved by shifting the focus away from the individual. Rather, aggregate level analysis must be designed to minimize the danger of an ecological fallacy.

Criteria. It is possible to develop a set of criteria by which the methodological soundness of any **aggregate** level analysis can be judged. However, these criteria are just necessary, yet not sufficient conditions for the validity of the research. As the authors of an introductory text on the subject (Langbein and Lichtman, 1978, p.61) conclude: »Theory, not technique, is the key to ecological inferences It can be rather misleading to judge a study solely on the plausibility of its substantive results, but complex (and, unfortunately, as a consequence often rather incomprehensible) statistical machinery alone does not necessarily render meaningful explanations either. The following criteria are especially geared towards voting research. They do not contain any new insights. Rather, they represent somewhat of a consensus among methodologists - possible disagreement over details notwithstanding. (6)

(1) The level of aggregation should be as low **as** possible. For example, the level of »Gemeinden« (communities) is more suitable than the level of »Kreise« (counties), which is better than the level of »Wahlkreise» (7) of which there were just 35 in the case of Weimar. However, certain data may not be available at a preferred lower level of aggregation (e.g. no unemployment figures on the Gemeinde level). Also, the gain in reduced aggregation must be balanced against the effort needed to construct such a data set.

(2) Party success should be measured by vote share based on all eligible voters. Absolute number of votes require additional controls for the size of the aggregation unit; vote shares based on votes cast or valid

votes require a similar control. In addition, when regressing the vote variable on indicators like percentage of workers estimates will be biased - unless turnout is uniform across these indicators. For technical details see Grofman (1987, p.42-44).

(3) Ideally, all indicators should be defined relative to a common base, the number of eligible voters in the aggregation unit. If this is not possible given the data available, the effect of different operationalizations should be checked by running parallel analyses. (8)

(4) Data should be analyzed using multiple regression (»ecological regression«) and unstandardized regression coefficients (b) rather than bivariate correlation coefficients (r). Bivariate analyses do not guard against the impact of third factors; standardized coefficients further complicate the ecological inference. (9)

(5) In specifying regression models both context and interaction effects should be considered; misspecified models may render highly biased estimates. The possibility of interaction effects is often recognized in the substantive discussion, e.g. by assuming a different effect of religious affiliation in rural and in urban areas or by positing varying effects of unemployment rates in different economic sectors. (10) The statistical model, then, should reflect the complexity of the substantive argument.

(6) Vote shares for all major parties or party blocks plus the share of non-voters should be included in the analysis. Emphasis should be placed on overall patterns rather than single coefficients.

(7) An estimation technique suitable for the particular kind of data (variables of restricted range, high likelihood of correlated errors, etc.) should be used. (11) Conventional OLS regression often serves as a good approximation; major results should be double checked using more refined forms of estimation (see e.g. Hanushek and Jackson 1977 as a good reference for social scientists). If shares for all parties are considered - as recommended - SURE (= seemingly unrelated regression estimation) should be used, as described in Zellner, 1962, or in Grofman and Michalski, 1988, as applied to election research.

(8) Obviously, using complex statistical techniques adequate technical documentation is necessary. However, typically the results can also be presented in a form accessible to a reader with just modest statistical background. Choice of adequate statistical tools does not preclude a form of presentation suitable for a methodologically less sophisticated readership. (12)

In addition, it is taken for granted that units are not selected arbitrarily. In general, the area of the Weimar Republic - or whatever special population is under study, e.g. Hamilton's (1982) analysis of large cities - must be fully covered to eliminate an additional source of bias. (13) Also, great care

must be exercised in the preparation of the data set. Apart from the obvious data cleaning, some merging of primary units may be necessary to achieve constant boundaries over time. With the work of the Falter group, a much better data set has become available for future research. (14) All things considered, aggregate analysis can legitimately be used to study individual voting behavior provided that proper caution is exercised. The recommendations above are to minimize the likelihood of ecological fallacies. These and other suggestions, e.g. the study of homogeneous units (Duncan and Davis, 1953), are a constructive response to Robinson's (1950) well justified, but overly gloomy warning.

Limits. However, there are limits to this kind of analysis. At times, researchers get carried away with numbers, with the fascination of seemingly precise quantitative measurement. I am particularly skeptical about a specific variant of ecological regression which is sometimes referred to as »(voter) swing analysis«. Here, an attempt is made to estimate the probability to vote for party A at a given election provided that party B was preferred at the preceding election - for all possible combinations of two parties, also including abstention as vote for a dummy party. For each party, such a model would state the percentages of previous voters who stayed with this party, who switched to any one of the competing parties, and who chose to abstain. Certainly, a fascinating idea. Models of this kind have been pursued with respect to both the Weimar elections (e.g. by Falter, 1987, p.490 and 502; and by Falter and Hänisch, 1986, p.211) and present day elections in the Federal Republic of Germany and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, it is next to impossible to arrive at reliable estimates for models of this sort. When survey data are available, initial 'transition rates' are derived from the respondents' recall of past and recent vote choice. Using smoothing algorithms, these estimates are then made compatible with the official election returns (marginal distributions). Sampling fluctuation, recall errors, and changes in the electorate produce margins of errors which make it unwise to take such estimated transition rates at face value (see e.g. Hoschka and Schunk, 1975; or Kuechler, 1983). In the absence of survey data, the situation is even less favorable. Here, unstandardized coefficients obtained when regressing recent party vote shares on preceding vote shares are interpreted as transition rates. Obviously, transition rates need to be in the range between 0 and 100 per cent. Typically, using conventional estimation techniques, (some) regression coefficients fall outside this range. For the purpose of swing analysis, this can be avoided by technical manipulations (e.g. by ridge regression) the exact form of which can not be justified by plausible substantive assumptions (see Kuechler 1983). In short: Swing analyses are exciting and easy to grasp, unfortunately they are built on rather shaky methodological grounds. The Falter group is not oblivious to the problems involved. A

careful reading (e.g. Falter and Hänisch, 1986, p.210) reveals quite a number of caveats, but they don't resist the temptation to present these analyses in a very suggestive manner. At best, swing analysis can provide qualitative trends and maybe ballpark figures, beyond this it amounts to reading tea leaves.

More generally, aggregate analysis is limited by the type of information available and/or useful for this purpose. Obviously, data on attitudes and opinions are not available for historical voting research. But there are limitation on socio-demographic data as well. Age and sex composition is available from census data, but these indicators typically show very little variance across units (e.g. »Kreise«). Ecological regression, then, does not produce meaningful estimates of sex or age effects on voting. In the case of Weimar, this is a serious limitation. For substantive reasons detailed below, significant such effects seem very plausible.

Before addressing the substantive issues, I summarize my methodological evaluation: Even some of the more recent work is seriously flawed with respect to the empirical analysis. This includes the generally well regarded monographs by Childers (1983) and by Hamilton (1982). Childers' study is plagued by fundamental statistical blunders (15) while Hamilton stops short of fully employing the instruments available. Only the work by Brown, Hänisch, and the Falter group represents an adequate level of methodological sophistication. There are differences of opinion with respect to certain aspects, e.g. my skeptical view of swing analyses in contrast to Falter's inclination. Overall, the substantive assertions in these studies are firmly grounded in empirical evidence.

Established Knowledge in Modern Voting Research

Obviously, great advances have been made in statistical methodology and quite a few of them are relevant for improving historical voting research. However, as said before, statistical machinery is not sufficient by itself. What can be learnt from modern voting research to further our understanding of the rise of fascism during the Weimar Republic? Is modern voting research on a much more solid base than its historical counterpart? There is no easy answer to this question. On the one hand, there is a solidly established body of knowledge based upon a series of survey studies as well as the representative voting statistics collected by the German Bureau of the Census. Among the numerous surveys dealing with voting in the Federal Republic, scholarly research was most assisted by the series of election studies initiated by Rudolf Wildenmann and Erwin K. Scheuch in the late 1950s. These studies provide systematic replication of key indicators and thus allow to monitor trends over time. And, they are generally available for secondary analysis. (16)

Sex and age specific voting behavior is most accurately portrayed by an analysis of a very large sample of particularly marked ballots - as specified in the German election laws - conducted by the German Census Bureau. On the other hand, modern voting research has its share of controversy. There is no generally accepted theory of voting behavior, even when the focus is restricted in time and location to postwar West Germany. Space prohibits a detailed discussion of consensus and controversy in modern voting research (see e.g. Kuechler 1977, 1980, and 1986a for series of such assessments). Below I will present selective results which seem to be particular relevant for the study of voting behavior during the Weimar Republic.

First, except for 1949 - and quite recently 1990, turnout in postwar West Germany has been uniformly high at about 85 to 90 per cent, clearly exceeding other Western democracies. Female turnout is slightly lower than male turnout, though the difference has decreased over time from about 2.5 percentage points to just 1 percentage point. With respect to age groups, a curvilinear pattern has persisted over the years: increasing turnout from the youngest to the middle age groups with a marked downturn in the oldest group of people 70 years and above (see e.g. Statistisches Bundesamt, 1984, p.27). Germans have become habitual voters, exercising the right to vote is largely considered as a democratic obligation, a norm of political behavior. Apart from generational replacement, the same persons vote in consecutive elections. (17)

Second, up to the late 1960s party preference of women differed clearly from that of men. On average, vote share for the (conservative) Christian Democrats among women was about 8 percentage points higher than among men (see e.g. Statistisches Bundesamt, 1984, p.42). The sex difference disappeared in the 1970s and has not reemerged in any significant form.

Third, vote choice is strongly influenced by social cleavages. Looking at the two major parties (CDU/CSU (18) and SPD), four indicators explain a large amount of variation in vote choice: social class, union membership, religious affiliation, and frequency of church attendance. Working class voters and union members tend to prefer the SPD, Catholics and frequent church attenders tend to opt for the CDU. (19) This structural pattern has not changed much over time. What has changed, however, is the size of the segment of voters which display socio-demographic characteristics most strongly determining party choice (such as the segment of active Catholics or of unionized workers). Or to put it the other way around: there is an increase of voters less tied to traditional cleavages and therefore more open to other influences.

Fourth, at least for the two major parties, there are relatively strong and persistent ties between voters and parties. Unfortunately, the problem of how to reliably measure such party attachment is largely unresolved. The concept of party identification as developed in the Michigan school of voting research can easily be operationalized in the context of the American political system. Yet, variants of a literal translation do not work well elsewhere. In Germany, this measure is heavily confounded with momentary party preference and consequently is largely tautological. Nevertheless, such questions are widely used, and there are less critical voices in the debate. At any rate, it is rather difficult to arrive at a reliable estimate for the share of Volatile* voters. Conservatively, I guesstimate this share to be around 15 per cent of all voters. (20)

Fifth, following the Michigan model, a considerable impact of issue evaluations on vote choice has been established for Germany as well. Perceived competence (of parties) to deal with specific problems is closely related to vote choice. Whether this should be thought of as a unidirectional causal relationship is subject to debate, however. It seems safer to assume that there is a reciprocal relationship between party preference and issue competence evaluations: Adherents of a party are more inclined to perceive the party of their choice as most competent, but issue competence may also induce a preference shift. This leads to so called non-recursive models the estimation of which produces a whole new set of methodological problems. However, questions of causality aside, it is instructive to determine which issues produce the closest relationship with vote choice. Here, perception of economic competence has consistently proven to be particularly important (e.g. Kuechler, 1985; Rattinger, 1985b). In contrast, results on the impact of the economic situation per se are decidedly more mixed (see Eulau and Lewis-Beck, 1985 for a cross-national review). In particular, there is little evidence that voters directly affected by unemployment tend to drastic changes in their voting behavior (see e.g. Rattinger 1985a).

Sixth, the institutional setting of electoral rules and regulations constitutes an important mediating factor. (21) The consolidation of the postwar party system in West Germany and corresponding clienteles was largely aided by a series of changes in the electoral law (up to the 1957 elections) which made it increasingly difficult for smaller parties to gain parliamentary representation.

So much for the body of knowledge modern voting research (on Germany) has accumulated and which is generally agreed upon - notwithstanding differences in emphasis. Also, since the late 1970s there is growing consensus that voting should be studied in a larger context. Voting is seen as the most prominent, but still just *one* manifestation of political beha-

vior. And political preferences are shaped by drawing upon or being exposed to various sources of information and opinion including personal networks (family, friends, peers) and mass media. Academic voting research is shifting its focus from behavioral outcome (the actual voting decision) to the underlying dynamics of the individual voters' formation, maintenance, and change of (political) attitudes as they take their cues from others in their social network, from the media and from organizations and institutions they relate to. Taking this approach one step further, the boundaries of the 'political' realm are questioned, and the life space (»Lebenswelt«) of the voter becomes the object of investigation. (22) However, as of now, this is a research program yet to be fully implemented.

All in all, the substantive results of modern voting research do not offer too much help in resolving the issues of research on Weimar. In general, it appears doubtful that theories dealing with social behavior in some detail can assume validity irrespective of time and location. Still, since the national context is the same, it is not implausible to assume some continuities over time. To some extent, then, what we know about voting behavior in postwar Germany may be used to ascertain the validity of claims made about Weimar.

Comparative Assessment

Social classes and parties in the Weimar Republic. As described earlier, the recent studies agree in rejecting the pointed characterization of the NSDAP clientele as radicalized lower middle classes - as most prominently advanced by Lipset (1960). They seem to establish a much more varied profile of the Nazi voters, and in part (Falter, Hänisch) they are much sounder from a methodological point of view. Yet, is a major revision warranted?

I am not to diminish the merits of these studies. It is important to collect and establish solid empirical evidence - beyond maybe correct, but largely intuitive insight. As far as substance is concerned, however, I feel that the differences are gradual only. Strong rhetoric seems to substitute for major new discoveries. And for the most part, the authors seem to be quite aware of the rather limited scope of truly warranted revisions. Falter, for example, pushes the notion of the NSDAP as the first Volkspartei as a catchy label, but he is much more careful in discussing its true meaning.

Apart from labeling, these more refined empirical analyses face one major problem: the limits of official statistics. In particular, the difference in definition between blue' and 'white' collar workers is not derived from some sociological concept, but follows the administrative logic of the German social security system (»Reichsversicherungsordnung«). The category

of t)lue collar workers' not only comprises industrial workers, but a variety of other population segments which might as well as be classified as lower middle class. Many examples can be given, where the distinction between white and blue collar seems to be rather arbitrary. To name just one: Why is a saleslady considered as 'white collar' while a hairdresser is classified as 'blue collar'? No surprise then, that segments within the »working class« - as determined by census categories - can be found which were prone to vote for the NSDAP. Official statistics are a poor proxy to establish sociological meaningful classes and strata, and, as a consequence, class analysis in the rise of Nazism can not be trusted to ecological regression alone. I do not concur with Allen's (1984) conclusion to abandon it altogether, but a more careful inspection of the underlying classification scheme is in order. I find it misleading to claim that major support for the NSDAP came from the »working class« - without proper reference to its operational definition.

To further support the *Volkspartei* notion, the concept of cleavage voting, of a correspondence between the social cleavage structure of a population and the party system as developed by Lipset and Rokkan (1967), is pushed to an extreme. In a modern industrial society there is no one-to-one correspondence between social strata and political parties. No major party recruits its voters from just one single strata or class, and no strata uniformly votes for one particular party. A case in point is the Zentrum. According to the 1925 census, 32.4 per cent of the population were Catholic whereas the combined vote share for Zentrum and BVP averaged between 12 and 13 per cent in the 1924-1932 period. Even if we assume that no single Protestant voted for the Zentrum/BVP, this party would have represented less than 50 per cent of all Catholics. So the majority of Catholics voted for other parties. But do these parties become Volksparteien in the process?

I think there is some fundamental trouble with the notion of *Volkspartei* when taken out of its original context (Kirchheimer, 1969). Obviously, it is not sufficient to base this concept on just some diversity in the clientele of a party. Also, that a party presents itself as open to all segments of the population - like the two major parties today and with some exceptions the NSDAP then - should not be considered as a sufficient criterion. Mintzel (1984a, 1984b, 1991) has repeatedly argued to abandon the term Volkspartei as having neither analytic nor heuristic value, and I concur with his line of reasoning.

What is left, is the now solidly established fact that the NSDAP clientele was more diversified than those of the Catholic and of the Left block parties. In part, this a simple consequence of the heterogeneity of the lower middle classes. In essence, then, there is no need for a major revision of the traditional thesis that the lower middle classes provided the major

support base for the Nazis. The new studies add important detail. However, by taking to catchy, but rather vague labels like »Volkspartei« these refinements are easily lost. Here, the strong rhetoric is counterproductive. It tends to obscure rather than to emphasize the importance of this work. Sound empirical confirmation and additional refinements, this is the major achievement of the Falter group and it is not a small feat.

For example, it is now convincingly demonstrated that both Zentrum and Left block parties not only kept their vote share constant, but that they kept their clientele intact. This appeared quite plausible given the global results (see again table 1), but now we can be sure about it. A major piece common to otherwise conflicting explanations of the rise of Nazism (Lipset, Kornhauser, Burnham - as detailed above) has been reconfirmed.

Yet, on the issue of party attachments, additional questions are of interest. In particular, we may find significant differences between men and women in their attachment to particular parties. Extrapolating to the past, the ties between Catholics and the Zentrum may be much stronger among female voters, and the ties between the industrial working class and the Left parties may be more pronounced among male voters. As discussed above, such sex differences can not be investigated by aggregate data analysis. However, some empirical evidence is furnished by official returns, samples of which were marked indicating sex and age group of the voter (see Falter et al., 1986, p.81-84). In contrast to the election statistics in the Federal Republic later on, these special counts (»Sonderauszählungen«) are not fully representative of the electorate, though. At any rate, it cannot be taken for granted that spouses voted alike. To a possibly significant extent, then, individual households may have produced votes for different parties. Class indicators, however, are either explicitly (when using the head of household as reference) or implicitly (given that double incomes were the exception rather than the rule) based on households.

It is not clear how to pursue this aspect empirically. For a quantitative statistical analysis individual level data are needed. Some such data are available, but they allow for an analysis of NSDAP-membership (see Kater, 1983, as a general reference, or e.g. Jarausch and Arminger, 1989, on the teaching profession during the Third Reich) rather than party attachment or vote choice. And there is a distinctive difference between formal membership (before 1933!) and psychological attachment.

Mobilization and volatility. Mostly, the middle class thesis (Lipset, 1960) and the mobilization theory (Bendix, 1952; after his recantation e.g. 0*Lessker, 1968) are seen as rival explanations. The more recent studies basically support the first - in essence, not in rhetoric - while they refute the second for the 1930 elections when major NSDAP gains first materialized (e.g. Hanisch, 1983, p.229; Brown, 1982, p.300; earlier Waldman, 1973, p.225). For the following elections in 1932, however, some bandwa-

gon effect is considered likely. Technically, these analyses seem sound. However, they are based on a rather narrow concept of mobilization. An increase in turnout obviously indicates a mobilization process. However, such a process may be at work even when turnout is constant. Non-voters may be persuaded to vote (for an emerging party), and past voters (of established parties) may stay home. And the amount of individual change in the voting electorate can be quite large (see again note 16). Again, aggregate data analysis is faced with an inherent limit.

There are two structural factors which make it plausible to assume a fairly high amount of volatility in the electorate even before turnout increased in 1930 and 1932. First, the party system was not consolidated, it was in a state of flux. (23) Second, due to universal suffrage and a lower age limit, the electorate had vastly expanded. With respect to the party system, the ongoing rearrangement of non-Catholic bourgeois parties thwarted the formation and maintenance of party attachments of voters in the political center. This created favorable conditions for new parties catering to the interests - and fears - of these voters. With respect to the newly enfranchised women, it seems plausible to assume that they showed less political interest and involvement (»Politik ist Männersache«) and that they were more likely to support conservative goals (law and order, economic security, etc), extrapolating findings from the early post World War II period to the past. In stark contrast to the CDU in the Federal Republic, the established parties of the Weimar Republic hardly satisfied the needs for strong leadership and economic success leaving a large segment of the electorate unattached to the political system.

However, little solid evidence is available to document that women were more drawn to the NSDAP than men. Sex specific election returns do indicate an overrepresentation of women in the clientele of conservative parties, but not necessarily among NSDAP voters. Unfortunately, for the decisive phase 1930-1932, only select non-representative data are available (see Falter et al., 1986, p.83-85).

In sum, it should not be assumed that the Weimar population was solidly split into a segment of habitual voters of some 75 per cent and a political aloof rest of some 25 per cent which was the primary target of mobilization strategies. Rather, the non-voting segment should be conceptualized as fluctuating, subject to time-specific mobilization strategies. In addition, successful mobilization in some segments may be counterbalanced by demobilization in others. Consequently, turnout figures (including those for smaller aggregate units like »Kreise«) may not capture the effect of Nazi mobilization strategies.

Economic crises unci system failure. Here, the studies of the Falter group truly break new ground and force substantial revisions of taken for granted knowledge: Personal hardship (unemployment) generally did not

translate into a vote for the Nazis. Unemployment among the industrial working class led to radicalization, but it favored the KPD as the more extreme of the two Left parties not the NSDAP. As always, ecological inference is problematic. Yet, using the much more suitable »Kreise« data base, earlier findings and more recent confirmations can now be dismissed. For example, Frey and Week (1981, p.23) had argued that the spectacular rise of the NSDAP was mainly due to high unemployment. They further contend that without the unemployed the Nazi vote share in July 1932 would been just 22.0 instead of 37.3 per cent (based on valid votes).

However, economic factors may still be at the heart of the rise of Nazism, though the link must be conceptualized in a different way. Falter et al. (1983, p.550) offer one such explanation. They hypothesize that the government loses confidence and support with voters not directly affected by unemployment but who perceive rising unemployment as an indicator of government ineffectiveness. However, unemployment is probably just one factor shaping the overall perception of the government's economic competence. Inflation is another, and most likely an even more important one. Without survey data, however, this issue cannot be resolved empirically.

Perceived economic competence - or lack thereof - on part of the established political parties, is **a** very plausible link between the economic crises and the rise of the NSDAP. It is fully consistent with the findings of modern voting research. For example, the first major economic downturn in the postwar era led to a remarkable success of the NPD (a neo-Nazi party by many standards) in the 1969 elections. However, unemployed voters were not more likely to vote for the NPD than others (see Rattinger, 1983, p.260). In contrast to Weimar much more restrictive electoral rules, i.e. the 5 per cent threshold, prevented their parliamentary representation in spite of capturing 4.3 per cent of the vote. However, the threshold was probably less important than a relatively quick economic recovery. Also, with the CDU forced into opposition, the established conservative party was better able to integrate voters leaning to the far Right.

In modern research, the importance of economic conditions for the voters' confidence and trust in the established political system is further documented by studies on system support over time. A dense time series covering the period from 1976 on shows a drastic decline of satisfaction with democracy parallel to a simultaneous rise of both unemployment and inflation in 1980/81; and a recovery of the satisfaction level after inflation was curbed (Kuechler, 1986b and 1991). Unemployment alone, however, is not sufficient for a marked loss of confidence. During the 1980s continuing high levels of unemployment coexisted with high satisfaction level.

Together, ecological analyses and substantive findings from modern voting research strongly suggest that the economic crisis was essential to the

quick rise of Nazism and the demise of the Weimar Republic. However, the unemployed themselves were not the major agent of this transition and unemployment alone does not necessarily result in a loss of system support.

Summary. Drawing on the various studies, the following comprehensive account emerges: The NSDAP met an electorate which predominantly had not formed strong attachments to established parties. Where such ties had developed - as between the industrial working class and the Left block parties and as between rural Catholics and Zentrum - they remained intact throughout the Weimar period. The lower middle classes (parts of which are classified as working class in the census categories) outside the rural Catholic areas constituted the mass base for the National Socialists. The failure of the established parties to master economic problems laid the ground for the Nazis' successful mobilization of dissatisfaction. However, the people most directly affected were not the prime agents. Rather, economic crises systematically eroded whatever system support there was in the first place. And in contrast to the situation after World War II, large segments of the population were latently hostile towards the democratic order right from the start. A largely unattached and disoriented electorate set the stage, economic doom provided the trigger for the rise of the NSDAP.

Consequences for Future Research

If this comprehensive view is correct, some implications for future research are imminent. First of all, additional ecological regression analyses covering all of Germany will have a diminishing rate of return. A comprehensive aggregate data set on the community level (»Gemeinden«) - another item on the agenda of the Falter group - would be more valuable as an information resource for regional and local studies than as a base for replications on a lower aggregation level. Further systematic empirical studies should focus on the mobilization strategies of the NSDAP on the one hand, and on the reluctance or openness on part of the voters to support the Nazi movement on the other (see also Hamilton, 1982, p.441). Why did the Nazis succeed where other radical parties opposing the established system, e.g. the Communists, failed? In the absence of survey data, i.e. data reflecting attitudes and beliefs, voting research must broaden its scope beyond the final act of voting. To gain deeper understanding of the NSDAP's electoral success, the Nazis must empirically be studied as a social and political movement. While the ideological aspect of the movement is well researched, much work is left to be done with respect to the organizational aspects. Here, the conceptual framework of resource mobilization theory (e.g. Zald and McCarthy, 1987) could be most helpful.

Given the lack of survey data and the highly specific nature of regional contexts, I feel that local studies are the best avenue for further systematic empirical research. Hamilton (1984) as well as Hennig (1987, 1989) provide examples of such an approach though they leave room for methodological improvements. Studies of this kind may include ecological regression analyses. But, more importantly, in local studies data from a variety of information sources can be included into a systematic empirical analysis. The dynamics of political preferences, in particular attraction and resistance to the Nazi movement, must be described in detail to truly understand the Nazi vote. In the process, disciplinary boundaries must be transgressed. Historical research with a perspective on everyday life (e.g. Peukert, 1987) needs to be blended with research traditions in sociology and political science. If successful, the shortage of data suitable for quantitative statistical analysis may turn into an asset. A new model for voting research -both historical and contemporary - may emerge at a time where modern electoral research is stifled by the overreliance on easily available survey data.

Local studies of this kind will require a substantial input of time and - like all local studies - they are faced with problem of external validity or generalizability. Local sites must be selected based on a conceptual typology of possible cases. The selected cases should be exemplars for key categories in such a typology. The knowledge accumulated so far is crucial for this selection process. The local studies, then, are not an alternative to the quantitative studies discussed here. Rather, they are a timely complement.

Notes

(1) An earlier version of this paper (in German) was presented at the 24th Meeting of the German Sociological Society (joint congress of the German, Austrian, and Swiss sociological societies), October 4-7, 1988, in Zurich, Switzerland, as part of the deliberations of an ad hoc group on the 'Sociology of National Socialism' convened by Thomas Herz. Apart from minor editorial changes, this version was completed in the fall of 1990. Several discussions with Jürgen Falter provided a number of very useful suggestions to improve the earlier version. I gratefully acknowledge his contributions notwithstanding some remaining difference of opinion.

(2) Heberle completed his study in 1934, but it was not published in Germany before 1963 as *Landbevölkerung und Nationalsozialismus.* In contrast to this German edition, the first American edition of 1945 and a new edition in 1970 (which I refer to) contains an in-

troductory chapter on genesis and nature of the NSDAP and a concluding chapter from which the quotation is taken.

(3) Apart from the now available comprehensive monograph (Falter 1991), a book chapter (Falter 1987) provides an overview easily accessible to non-specialists while a journal article (Falter and Hänisch 1986) follows a more traditional academic format. In English, Falter (1990) is the most suitable source.

(4) Obviously, with respect to other research topics, aggregate units may constitute genuine social units. See Hannan (1971) for a more general discussion on aggregation and disaggregation in sociology.

(5) There are over 1100 »Kreise« in the Weimar Republic. To eliminate the effect of changing boundaries some merging was necessary. Hänisch (1983) considers 787 units, the Falter »Kreise« data base consists of 831 units.

(6) As with any standard methodological topic with potentially broad applications, specific discussions on the issue are likely to reoccur in various substantive fields. Sometimes these debates get heated, but typically they quickly lose significance. Thus, no attempt is made to reconstruct the debate in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* from the early 1970s. The title in the Sage paper series (Langbein and Lichtman, 1978) covers this debate and provides a nice introduction requiring only a moderate amount of statistical background.

(7) »Wahlkreis« could be literally translated as »constituency«. However, the use of this term may be misleading for readers used to majority voting systems.

(8) This is especially important for unemployment indicators where there is a wide choice of options. Such indicators can be based on all persons in the labor force (»Erwerbspersonen«), on all persons currently employed (»Erwerbstätige«), on all persons employed in a particular sector of the economy, on the total population - above/below a certain age, etc. In case of the Weimar Republic total population may be the best choice short of total population over age 20 (which is practically identical with the pool of eligible voters). Employment statistics (»Beschäftigten-Statistik«) should be avoided, because they are based on the location of the employer rather than the residence of the employee.

(9) Today, the only legitimate use of (bivariate) correlations is in providing direct comparisons with the older, methodologically less sophisticated literature.

(10) Necessarily, the introduction of an interaction term causes a high level of multicollinearity (as measured by the tolerance or a similar regression statistic). However, subdividing the population according to the values of one variable e.g. into predominantly Protestant and predominantly Catholic »Kreise«, has even more disadvantages.

(11) In general, analysis of this kind are based on the total population of (aggregate) units rather than on a random sample. Consequently, the issue may be raised whether the use of any form of statistical inference is adequate. However, this is an old debate which will never be settled for good. One (old) justification involves the notion of a hypothetical universe', see e.g. Kuechler (1979, p.l 14—117 for a more detailed discussion).

(12) As an example, 'tree analysis' diagrams as found in several publication of the Falter group could be based on adequate statistical techniques rather than simple percentage calculation based on an increasingly small number of cases - and hence high margins of error.

(13) Childers (1983, p.276) is an unfortunate counter example. There is no documentation (the methodological appendix included) on how he selected a total of 212 urban and 266 rural communities.

(14) The ICPSR (Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research in Ann Arbor, MI, USA) data set »German Weimar Republic Data, 1920-1933« (ICPSR Study-No. 0042) contains a number of errors (see Falter and Gruner, 1981 for details). Yet, until recently, it was the only generally available machine-readable source.

(15) This is best documented by the two tables in which he summarizes the major results of his statistical analysis (Childers, 1983, p.280/281): For almost all elections between 1924 and 1932, the NSDAP vote share is positively related to both the percentage of Catholics and the percentage of Protestants. This is pure nonsense from a substantive point of view and not just a computation or printing error. Childers fails to realize that regression estimates are sensitive to multicollinearity, and including both indicators produces just this: In Weimar, the percentage of Catholics and the percentage of Protestants add up to almost exactly 1 in all units.

(16) Major contributions to the organization and implementation of these studies were made by Max Kaase, Hans-Dieter Klingemann, and Franz-Urban Pappi. Since 1974 these studies are conducted by the »Forschungsgruppe Wahlen« (Manfred Berger, Wolfgang Gibowski, Dieter Roth). All studies are part of the German Electoral Data (GED) project at the Central Archive at the University of Cologne, Germany, and ICPSR at the University of Michigan, USA and can be obtained from these sources at nominal cost.

(17) In part, this is a consequence of high turnout. Leaving aside generational replacement, only between 0 and 11 per cent of the voters could have previously abstained if turnout is 90 per cent at both times. In contrast, with a turnout of 75 per cent, the mathematical possible range of new voters would extend from 0 to 33 per cent. Additional survey data indicate an empirical value close to the lower bound.

(18) Technically, CDU and CSU are separate parties like Zentrum and BVP during Weimar. With respect to voting they are treated as one since they do not compete against each other at the polls.

(19) This is a very general characterization which holds over time. For any specific election, more refined analyses usually show some interaction effects, e.g. no effect of union membership among frequent church attenders. Such analyses are models which of course must be compatible with the empirical data base. However, models with different specific traits can be equally compatible with the data (see e.g. Kuechler, 1979, with applications to the 1976 elections in West Germany).

(20) Taking survey responses at face value much higher figures can be derived. However, momentary preference or hypothetical vote choice tend to inflate propensity for actual change of party alliance. It is somewhat like establishing divorce rates by responses to survey questions about marital happiness.

(21) Jesse (1985) provides a detailed overview on the subject in post-war Germany; Schanbacher (1982) is a valuable source for the Weimar Republic.

(22) See Brand and Honolka (1986) for some interesting attempts to pursue such a research agenda. Unfortunately, many methodological problem remain to be solved.

(23) See Claggett et al. (1982) on the formation of the German party system in pre-Weimar and the impact of political leadership as well as social composition of the electorate.

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